

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY URGES EXPANSION OF DAIRY COMPACT

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today joined a bipartisan group of his colleagues in reintroducing legislation that would expand the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact, which currently includes only the New England states, to include New York and four other states. The bill would also create a compact for southern states. Hinchey spoke today at a press conference to announce the reintroduction of the bill.

"Inclusion in the Dairy Compact is absolutely essential for New York's dairy farmers," said Hinchey. "Without compacts, a handful of giant corporations would have complete control the dairy market and the small dairy farmer would become extinct. We need to pass this bill to keep the family farmer on the farm and to protect consumers as well."

In the past 20 years, the price of feed and equipment has increased with inflation, but the price farmers get for milk has remained stagnant. Consequently, the number of dairy farmers in New York State has dropped from more than 14,000 in 1985 to about 8,000 last year. The farmers who have gone out of business most often give the price of milk as the reason for the farm's failure.

A dairy compact is a coalition of states that sets prices farmers get for milk above what would otherwise be allowed by federal price regulations. The compact can maintain a stable and more predictable price, making small dairy farms much more viable. Congress authorized the establishment of the Northeast Compact in the 1996 Farm Bill after months of hard work by a bipartisan group of Northeasterners. Hinchey was an ardent supporter of the Compact's creation and has continued to fight for the inclusion of New York.

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